

SWCDs, Others Bring Conservation to Kids

Do you remember racing around the backyard as a kid playing the Lone Ranger or Gene or Roy? I do ...and did, at least until the family's big Rhode Island Red rooster knocked me flatter than a pancake because I sent the hens scattering with my antics. But many of today's kids lack such understanding of rural life.

Several of the state's soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) have important education components in their work plans and are setting out to change that.

A challenging activity for kids recently staged was the New Mexico Envirothon State Competition held in Ruidoso. At Envirothons, high school teams' knowledge about the conservation of resources is tested through both hands-on sites and a written final test. The Vectors, sponsored by the Ciudad SWCD, walked away with the overall prize at the Ruidoso event. They will represent New Mexico at the national Envirothon Competition in Flagstaff, Arizona in July, where they will be competing against 47 other states and four Canadian provinces. Soil and water conservation districts sponsoring the state Envirothon this year included the Ciudad SWCD, Taos SWCD, Claunch-Pinto SWCD, Sierra SWCD, Edgewood SWCD, and East Torrance SWCD.

Other events the soil and water conservation districts have supported include the San Francisco SWCD hosted Ranch Days in Silver City, Canadian River SWCD supported outdoor classroom day, Lava SWCD sponsored AgDays that included a rodeo, Carlsbad SWCD participation at the Carlsbad Children's Water Festival along with the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, and Chaves SWCD support at the Kids, Kows, and More event in Roswell.

The soil and water conservation districts are such huge supporters of youth education that we are probably missing some events here, but suffice to say these happenings are great experiences for the kids and presenters alike.

And, what do the kids get out of these events?

One pundit noted that after the Kids, Kows, and More event in Roswell, some 1500 fourth graders from Chaves and Eddy counties just might give you a good run for your money in a competition based on knowledge of agriculture issues.

The event was sponsored by Southwest Dairy Farmers and Chaves County Extension, with the additional teaching assistance of the Chaves SWCD, NRCS, and Chaves



Envirothon competitor tackles soils test

County Coordinated Weed Management Area. To complete a cotton presentation that ranged from planting seed to buying a pair of Levis, Joy Wagner, Chaves SWCD, used a slide show, bale of cotton, and small scale working cotton gin to get across to the students participating. Tim Boggan, Chaves County weed coordinator used down to earth talk, pictures, handouts, and actual plant specimens leaving students with much to think about – in addition to five other sessions pertaining to agriculture.

Ty Carter, NRCS range management specialist, and Troy Thompson, Farm Bill soil conservationist, staffed a Rolling Rivers trailer, demonstrating different techniques and practices used in prevention of soil erosion. And, what kind of questions did the kids ask them – “What kind of water is that? Why does the water smell? How deep are water wells? Who first invented water? How long did it take you to make the trailer?” It has been suggested that if you want the answers to these and other question, call the Roswell NRCS Field Office.

Do not forget that many other agencies and organizations are joining in to host these fun-filled events. The willingness of New Mexico's broad agriculture community to reach our young people who may not know about Rhode Island Red roosters is amazing, and a real tribute to our many farmers and ranchers and the infrastructure that supports them.